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Berita

Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group Association for Asian Studies

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Gender and Islamic Finance: Al Hilal Bank's recently launched Laha or "For her" scented credit card.
See Laura Elder's featured article in this issue of *Berita*.

Chair's Address

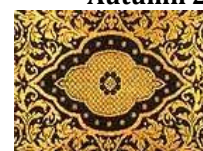
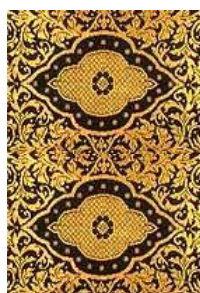
The 2015 Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei Studies Group Business Meeting was held on March 27, 2015 in conjunction with the Association for Asian Studies Conference in Chicago. As the Chair, Tim Daniels, was able to attend, the meeting was chaired by myself, Eric Thompson, as Chair-Elect. This was also the last year of Tim Daniels three-year term as Chair. I will now be Chair, officially from the close of the 2015 Business meeting and through the 2016, 2017 and 2018 meetings. At the start of the Business Meeting, Patricia Sloane-White was nominated and unanimously voted in to assume the role of Chair-Elect and Vice-Chair for the coming three years and to then assume the Chair of the group for 2019 through 2021. As incoming Chair, I wish to express my appreciation for Tim Daniels' service to the group, working to sustain this *Berita* newsletter, prepare reports for the Southeast Asia Council through which we receive funding for activities, organize panel sponsorship at the annual AAS meetings as well as the John Lent and Ronald Provencher prizes along with an array of other group activities. I also am very appreciative of Patricia Sloane-White's willingness to take up the Chair-Elect role and look forward to working with her in the coming years.

At the 2015 Business Meeting, we also awarded the two aforementioned prizes. The winner of the John Lent Prize for best paper presented at the previous year's meeting was Elvin Ong (PhD candidate in Political Science at Emory University). The committee also awarded an honorable mention to the paper presented by Jack Meng Tat-Chia (PhD candidate in History at Cornell University). Recipient of the Provencher Travel Grant was Jason Ng (University of Melbourne). All three are making commendable contributions to Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei studies. The Prize Committee was chaired by Patricia Hardwick, along with Tom Pepinsky and Patricia Sloane-White.

At the Business Meeting, the status and prospects for this *Berita* newsletter were discussed. Tim Daniels had taken over editorship of the newsletter on an interim basis for Autumn 2014 and Spring 2015. To date, establishing a new permanent editor or editorial team for the newsletter has yet to be resolved, so for the time being, I am undertaking these duties. I am hopeful that we can find the means and group support to set the newsletter on a more solid basis from our next Business Meeting onward. That meeting will be held, as always, in conjunction with the AAS Conference at the end of March. This year we will be meeting in Seattle. I look forward to seeing longtime members and new faces there to help chart our course to 2020 and beyond (which is right around the corner!).

*Eric C. Thompson, National University of Singapore
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Editor's Foreword

Many thanks to those who have contributed material for the current newsletter. The first items in the newsletter are commendations of the MSB Prize Committee for the awardees of the John A. Lent Prize for best paper presented at the previous year AAS Conference and the Ronald Provencher Travel Grant established to support graduate student travel to the AAS annual meetings. The first commendation details the strengths of the prize-winning paper "Complementary Informal Institutions in Authoritarian Regimes: Deconstructing Meet-The-People Sessions in Singapore" by Elvin Ong. The committee also awarded honorable mention to "Defending the Dharma: Buddhist Activism in a Global City State" by Jack Meng Tat-Chia and summarize its important contributions in the commendation as well.

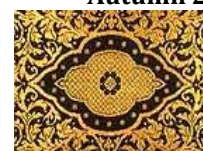
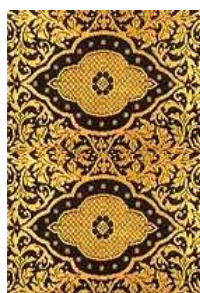
We have two featured articles in this edition of *Berita*, by Meredith Weiss and Laura Elder. Weiss's article, "Rabbits or rebels? Making sense of Singapore's 2015 elections", reflects on the outcome and implications of Singapore's 12th General Election held in September 2015. Having observed the election first-hand in Singapore, Weiss summarizes key issues and trends in the event which saw the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) capture a large swing of the vote in their favor. In the second article, Elder examines the intersection of gender and Islamic finance in Malaysia, providing us with interesting insights and a preliminary analysis from her ongoing fieldwork and research into the topic. She provides a range of evidence that speaks to ways in which gender and women's roles are essentialized in this realm and the implications for women's participation in the Islamic financial sector.

The two articles are followed by two field reports. The first is a set of reflections by Ed Kellerman, who is currently a Fulbright Fellow in Malaysia. Kellerman has been traveling and working in Malaysia since completing a Peace Corp stint there in the 1970s. In this essay, he reflects on his varied experiences in Malaysia and the insights they give him into his professional specialization of cross-cultural communication. Our second field report is by Jack Meng Tat-Chia, who gives a detailed report on his experience with the Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies Library in Kuala Lumpur. This library is an important resource for scholars of the Chinese community in Malaysia and Meng's report should be a useful guide to those interested in such materials.

Finally, I have included a set of abstracts for panels with Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei content slated for the upcoming Association for Asian Studies Conference in Seattle. I hope that many readers of this newsletter will be attending the Conference and participate in the listed panels – particularly the MSB Sponsored Panel – as well as the MSB Business Meeting, the time and date of which will be announced when the full AAS Program is published in February 2016.

*Eric C. Thompson, National University of Singapore
Interim Editor*

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Prizes

John A. Lent Prize (2015, Chicago)

Prof. John A. Lent founded Berita in 1975, editing it for twenty-six years, and founded the Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group in 1976, serving as chair for eight years. He has been a university faculty member since 1960, in Malaysia, the Philippines, China, and various U.S. universities. From 1972-74, Prof. Lent was founding director of Malaysia's first university-level mass communications program at Universiti Sains Malaysia, and has been professor at Temple University since 1974.

Over the years, Prof. Lent has written monographs and many articles on Malaysian mass media, animation, and cartooning. He is the author and editor of seventy-one books and monographs, and hundreds of articles and book chapters. Since 1994, he has chaired the Asian Cinema Society and has been the editor of the journal Asian Cinema. He publishes and edits International Journal of Comic Art, which he started in 1999, and is chair of Asian Research Center on Animation and Comic Art and Asian-Pacific Association of Comic Art, both of which he established, and are located in China.

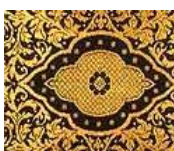
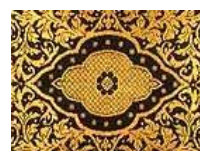
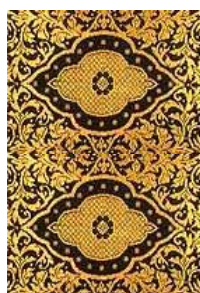
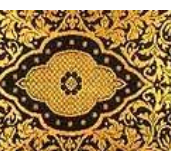
The Lent Prize Committee has selected a paper prizewinner and an honorable mention for the 2015 MSB Lent Prize. After careful consideration the Lent Prize Committee has agreed that Elvin Ong should be awarded this year's Lent Prize for his paper "Complementary Informal Institutions in Authoritarian Regimes: Deconstructing Meet-The-People Sessions in

Singapore" and that Jack Meng Tat-Chia should be recognized with an Honorable Mention for his paper "Defending the Dharma: Buddhist Activism in a Global City State".

Ong's paper represents the best kind of interdisciplinary research in the social sciences and Asian studies. It draws on an array of theoretical insights—from institutionalism to performativity—to understand the role of Meet the People sessions in contemporary Singaporean politics. Ong argues convincingly that these oft-ridiculed events actually perform specific functions that stabilize the rule of the hegemonic People's Action Party: they *generate information* on popular concerns, *socialize* new members of the PAP, and *symbolically perform* elite domination. His analysis is therefore an important contribution to a burgeoning literature on authoritarian institutions in comparative politics, and also a unique contribution to Singapore political studies that integrates general theoretical insights with the rich texture of a contemporary case study.

Chia's paper is a considered analysis of mobilization, activism, and doctrine in Singapore's Buddhist community in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, focusing in particular on the activities of the Singaporean Buddhist Federation. Chia's paper is distinctive in its close attention to Dharma, taking it seriously as an

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object of both political contestation and religious activism. But Chia deftly weaves in considerations the historical, political, and social contexts in which discussions of Dharma and doctrine take place. The result is a compelling, grounded analysis of the core drivers of activism by the Singaporean Buddhist Federation. It has obvious implications for Singapore studies, and also represents an important contribution to Buddhist studies that highlights how religion, politics, and mobilization interact.

Ronald Provencher Travel Grant (2015, Chicago)

The Ronald Provencher Travel Grant is named in honor of Ronald Provencher, distinguished cultural anthropologist of Malaysia, a long-time leader of the Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group (Association for Asian Studies) and editor of Berita Newsletter. It carries with it a US\$750 award for a graduate student from Malaysia, Singapore or Brunei to travel to present a paper at the Association for Asian Studies meeting.

The Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group (MSB) is presenting the Ronald Provencher Travel Grant for the third time this year. It is being awarded to Sze Chieh Ng a Malaysian doctoral student at the University of Melbourne, Australia, for his extended proposal for the paper titled, “Jungle Lives: Malaya as Depicted in Malayan Communist Memoirs.” He will present this paper at this year’s AAS Meetings on the panel, “Life Writing in Modern Asia: Exploring the Selves and Histories in Autobiographies, Diaries, Memoirs, and Personal Narratives of

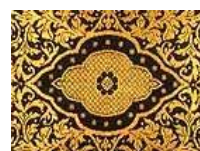
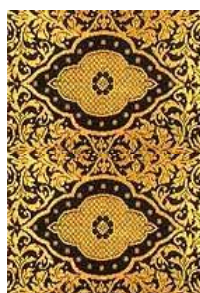
Japan, China, Malaysia and Indonesia” organized by Shan Windsript.

Sze Chieh Ng (Jason) is a Malaysian with a background in History. He earned a bachelors and a master’s degree at Arizona State University in History and is currently a doctoral candidate in History at the University of Melbourne. Ng is interested in the history of Southeast Asia and the Malayan Communist insurgency.

Sze Chieh Ng’s extended paper proposal reviewed some pertinent literature about the armed insurrection waged by the Communist Party between 1948 and 1989, underscoring the influence of Cold War politics on depictions of the MCP. However, Ng notes that the memoirs of MCP members reveal a different picture, including their lack of support from neighboring communist regimes and the role of indigenous *Orang Asal* tribes on both British and Communist sides. He strives to provide a historical analysis through interrogating the memoirs of MCP members utilizing historiographical assessments, reflections, and perceptions.

Through his careful and interpretative reading of the representations, values, memories, and identities of these communist authors, he aims to reconstruct the journeys of these revolutionaries and to undermine the slanted historical narratives of British and contemporary Malaysian elites. Sze Chieh Ng argues that his examination of the MCP written memoirs challenges the conservative assumptions about Malaya’s history and the official Malaysian nation-building myths.

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Feature Article

Rabbits or rebels? Making sense of Singapore's 2015 elections ***By Meredith Weiss***

Editor's Note: The following essay was originally published by Brookings online at: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2015/09/22-singapore-rabbits-or-rebels-weiss>. It is reprinted here with permission.

On September 11, 2015, Singapore held its 12th general election since independence in 1965. While voting is mandatory, this was the first post-independence election in which all Singaporeans could vote, as all seats were contested. Despite massive turnout at opposition rallies, insistent complaints of government failings, and some formidable challengers, the incumbent People's Action Party (PAP) increased its vote share by nearly 10 percent, to 70 percent, and won back one constituency, to secure a total of 83 out of 89 seats.^[1]

Pundits strove to make sense of a seemingly anomalous result; while a PAP win was certain, only few had anticipated the party's actually gaining ground. Most credited the result to: a mixture of a slew of goodies for all, delivered since the PAP's poor showing at the previous election; the hubristic afterglow of Singapore's 50th anniversary celebrations one month previously; fealty to the beloved Lee Kuan Yew, who passed away in March; persistent fear of a "freak result," in which the opposition actually forms the government; the PAP's increased

efforts to respond to bread-and-butter grievances and appear more human and humane; concerns over the opposition's competency at municipal management; gerrymandering and consummate political surfing; the lesser reputation or credibility especially of the smaller, newer opposition parties; and, national security amidst political/economic meltdown in Malaysia, debilitating air pollution from Indonesia, Syria's Islamic State, and invocation of an earlier "9/11."

Rather than rehash these arguments, I will focus on what these elections might indicate. In short, the progress of the elections suggests a changed political landscape. To explain, I look first to the PAP and the path it has carved, then to the opposition, and lastly, to the voting public.

The PAP has won securely, but at the cost of ever-higher expectations. In its yen to claim responsibility for all things good in Singapore, the party also takes the blame when anything goes wrong: a subway breakdown mid-campaign seemed potentially calamitous, however tangential to elections almost anywhere else. And its securing support through heavy social spending not only encumbers the budget, but also undercuts the PAP's eschewal of welfarism and dependency. Rather, voters may now come to expect sufficient carrots for a nation of rabbits.

At the same time, technocratic expertise is no longer sufficient. PAP rally speeches proudly tout the party's "unpopular" policies, versus the opposition's "populist" approaches. Only a party that does not expect to compete can so dismiss popularity. The PAP can heretofore anticipate not only real competition, but a voting public

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that demands convincing that the policy alternatives chosen are the best ones.

By the same token, as PAP candidates' rags-to-riches personal rally narratives made clear, the party recognizes the need to exude likeability and humility. ("Heart" references peppered discourse on all sides throughout the campaign.) The vast majority of MPs live not only outside their constituency, but outside the subsidized Housing Development Board flats in which 80 percent of Singaporeans reside, and many are demonstrably out-of-touch with the masses. While the PAP is unlikely to significantly revise its secretive, top-down system for tapping candidates, often from top ranks in the civil service and military, party leaders are aware that much of the public resents the assumption of a "natural aristocracy." Already the victors' paeans to humility have begun.



People's Action Party Rally, Serangoon GRC

Legwork then becomes all the more salient. The PAP has been holding meet-the-people sessions and door-to-door walkabouts since its inception in the 1950s. These efforts benefit

from extensive "grassroots" assistance. However, MPs themselves—chosen for their high-flying careers and professional competence—are increasingly expected to show their face, however inefficient a use of their time.



Worker's Party Rally, East Coast GRC

The opposition confronts many of the same concerns. Perhaps the biggest sign of an emerging "new normal" in Singapore is the climate for opposition politics—but the magnitude of that thaw should not be overestimated. No opposition candidates were charged with libel, none were barred from contesting on technicalities, and personal attacks on character and quality were less vitriolic than in the past. Moreover, politically interested citizens swarmed opposition rallies with impunity, while PAP rallies drew larger than expected crowds—even if few actively flaunt opposition loyalties.

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The opposition still faces an uphill battle. Their candidates must match the blend of likeability, competence, and credentials expected of PAP rivals. They must be able to convince voters not only of their policy aptitude, but also of their ability to manage a housing estate, a role accorded to MPs since the 1988 Town Council Act. The former requirement led to highly technical cross-rally parries over provisions and funding mechanisms for policies enacted or proposed. Yet the latter is more of a challenge. Opposition-run town councils lack the support of the People's Association network of local organizations that monitors and supports PAP-run wards. (The PAP appoints a "grassroots advisor" in opposition-held constituencies; elsewhere, the MP plays that role.) Opposition MPs are less able, too, to secure government grants for desired improvements. These town councils find few takers for their management contracts, lose economies of scale in service-provision, and face tight scrutiny. Heavily publicized alleged anomalies in town council accounts undoubtedly cost the votes for the Workers' Party of Singapore (WP), notwithstanding cognate revelations about PAP-held wards. Less established opposition parties have an even harder time convincing voters of their management wherewithal.

Meanwhile, opposition parties suffer from the more mundane issues of chronic disorganization, inability to collaborate, and resource constraints. Funding is especially challenging. Only contributions of less than SGD5,000 may be anonymous, which discourages larger donations, while foreign funds are verboten. Most opposition parties rely on sales of newspapers, books, and paraphernalia to support their efforts. The

uncertain election date and brief campaign period make it harder for opposition parties to secure not just printed materials, but vehicles, sound stages, and other campaign equipment. Online videos face byzantine regulations, and rallies are permitted only at precisely demarcated times and venues. Nor is it an easy matter to decide to run. Longer-time opposition leaders in particular have lost jobs or faced other penalties for their politics, and others have been sued or imprisoned. If they do stand, friends and family may still hesitate to align openly with them.



Reform Party Rally, West Coast GRC.

Still, polls demonstrated that voters do discriminate among opposition parties. About one-fourth will vote for any non-PAP candidate, but garnering even one-third of votes requires an active positive assessment. What voters seem to want most, though, limits opposition parties: the electorate favors a "co-driver" or "responsible opposition" frame. For a party to present a different ideology or vision is deemed radical and would raise untenable expectations, regardless. To say a party "opposes for the sake of opposing" is a (frequent) insult.

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Lastly, outreach remains the bane of opposition politics. Much as it does for the PAP, the electorate now expects to see opposition party representatives working the ground and propounding proposals between elections. Yet unlike elected MPs, opposition activists are not paid hefty salaries for doing so, do not have well-resourced grassroots networks at their disposal, and are not in a position to do much for the voters. Social media are available and cheap, but serve more to magnify voices of supporters than to reach swing voters or opponents, and mainstream media still lean PAP.

Which brings us to the voters themselves. A dearth of useful surveys—forbidden altogether during election time—renders a nuanced reading of specific segments' preferences or leanings difficult. The volume of complaints and the crowds at rallies suggest voters do want a chance to vent; it is less clear whether they require opposition MPs to then amplify their grievances in parliament, once the (increasingly responsive) PAP has heard them. If the real goals were a mere liberal polity, we might see greater efflorescence of civil societal activity or other modes of participation outside elections and media, yet there has been no notable upsurge in associational activity, nor has civil societal organizations tested proscriptions against partisan engagement this election. Widespread consternation over recent crackdowns on several bloggers in particular might have made civil liberties a central election issue, but in fact, even the civil libertarian Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) focused overwhelmingly on more material concerns.

Meanwhile, even party strategists are hard-pressed to pinpoint their core and swing voters. While the PAP credits young voters for saving

the day, other parties are more vague on their base. The Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) deems upper middle-income voters their main backers while the less well-off are too dependent on PAP to defect (and the PAP obfuscates what is from the state versus the PAP) and the upper class are less concerned with the policies parties tout. The WP's traditional base is in the Teochew dialect group, concentrated on the east coast, yet ties to that heritage have weakened over time. Both the WP and the Singapore People's Party, though, seem to appeal more to Chinese-educated voters than either the SDP or the PAP—with the caveat that socioeconomic class may trump other affiliations, and the older "Pioneer Generation" (many of them non-Anglophone) seems to have responded well to handouts. Expecting close races, both sides courted minority votes, too. Malay candidates addressed their community specifically in Malay language, advocating the need for either a strong mandate for an inclusive single party to fulfill community aspirations, or a lively and substantial parliamentary opposition to raise "sensitive" issues and protect against discrimination.

In the end, the PAP won the day. Still, the party governs now on somewhat new terms. Gone are the days of blind acceptance of technocratic management—or suppression with impunity of those not willing to toe that line. Politics has changed in Singapore, however subtly, regardless of who sits in parliament.

Meredith Weiss is Associate Professor, Dept. of Political Science, University of Albany-SUNY

[1] My thanks to many friends and colleagues whose perspectives have deeply informed my own, especially Loke Hoe-Yeong, Luenne Choa, and Eileena Lee.

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Feature Article

Greening the glass ceiling? Shaping of Malaysian women's Shariah expertise as global Islamic financial expertise

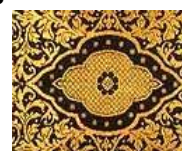
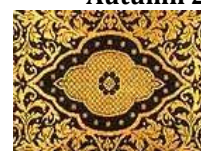
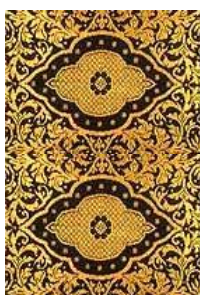
By Laura Elder

Viewed by its proponents as the leading edge of alternative, ethical investment practice, Islamic Finance – generally defined as the provision of financial instruments designed to fit within a framework of Islamic-defined or sharia, interest free investment – is one of the fastest growing segments of the global financial services industry (Henry and Wilson 2004; Zawya State of the Global Islamic Economy Report Team 2014). Among the most notable features of this market are the increasing competition between Gulf Cooperation Council and Southeast Asian regimes and, as well, the role that Malaysian women are playing in interpreting sharia compliance and creating new products (Bahry 2005; Metcalfe 2011; Pollard and Samers 2013; Rethel 2010). By way of contrast, in other regional financial centers the Islamic finance industry is a predominantly male industry (Pike and Pollard 2010). Most crucially, Malaysia also contrasts with the norms of international finance globally, where women represent a small minority in industry and global financial governance institutions (Fisher 2012; Ho 2009; Zaloom 2006). By tracing the gendering of these markets, I seek to assess Malaysia's competitive efforts to accumulate material and social capital as a global provider and arbiter of what counts as Islamic finance.

Talking with people in the financial services industry in Malaysia, I often start with a question asked in an open forum of the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland: "Would we be in the same mess today if Lehman Brothers had been Lehman Sisters (Bennhold 2009)?" This question and the defensive response by some participants' at the yearly gathering of this club for rule makers in the global economy, points to the centrality of both gendered expectations and boundaries which are often drawn in financial markets (see also Fisher 2012, 1). This example usually sparks an immediate response regarding how Malaysia's expectations and obligations for women at work are both similar and different to those of Wall Street. For example, the CEO of the Islamic arm of a regional conglomerate bank offered her heightened testosterone levels – stating "I know, I had myself tested" – as an explanation for both her choice to go into finance and her success in the field.

Of course the resort to gendered differences and claims about sexuality as explanations for success and failure in finance is an old trope within discussions of economics, entrepreneurialism, and leadership (see for example De Goede 2005; McDowell 1997; McDowell 2014). Another recent example that provokes critique in Malaysia is Al Hilal Bank's recently launched Laha or "For her" scented credit card, "a card that captures your essence and celebrates your uniqueness." Indeed all of these examples turn on assumptions of innate differences between men and women in the arena of managing money, risk, corporate, and social responsibilities. In the first, case of Lehman Sisters, the assumption is that women in management and leadership positions will

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manage risks differently. In the second case, of “I had myself tested,” the assumption is that women are normally, hormonally different than men and that this leads to different behavior while working for financial corporations. And in the last case, of the perfumed credit card, the assumption is that female consumers are driven by different goals when choosing among financial intermediaries.



Feminine Credit Card from Al Hilal Bank

Taken together, these three cases provide a window into my ongoing fieldwork in Malaysia. I want to unpack how representations of gendered differences are wielded, as potent tools, at work in global financial markets. As a cultural anthropologist, I view these differences as being cultural constructed, culturally created. And from my comparative point of view culture is the bundling of sets of expectations and sets of obligations. For example, within financial markets, in terms of obligations, women are expected to adhere to the norms of behavior previously established in financial markets prior to their participation. And, in terms of

obligations, socially women are obliged to carry the double burden or paid work and unpaid reproductive, child, and elder care work.

Unsurprisingly, these bundled sets of expectations have become increasingly global despite the persistence of local, sets of obligations and expectations surrounding market and morality. For example, in the Malaysian context, American assumptions about akal or reason and nafsu or desire are overturned. In the US we often assign both rationality and desire to men (think of Wolves of Wall Street for example), whereas over time Malaysian's have sometimes assigned nafsu to women and akal to men (though this remains contested). (Frisk 2009; Peletz 1996; Wazir-Jahan Begum Karim 1992). But in specifically Malay cultural discourse these gendered boundaries are counterweighted by adat. For example, women have been represented as better at taking care of money and investing in different times and places, for example, Negeri Sembilan and Kelantan.

What is at stake in these representations is the value of women's work (both a cultural valuation and an economic valuation). In the context of Malaysia, for example, women are exiting the workforce (particularly from white collar jobs) at an increasing rate. This exit by elite women from the workforce is another kind of “brain drain.” Indeed a recent OECD report shows that, at 44%, Malaysia's overall female participation in the workforce is much smaller than the rest of ASEAN (United Nations Development Program 2014). The other kind of “brain drain” – out of the Malaysian workforce to overseas work – points of course to the fact that both labor markets and representations of the value of women's work are global. Given the economic

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valuation of women's work, in 2009 the government set a target of 30% women's representation in management positions in the 9th Malaysia Plan (see also "TalentCorp Malaysia" 2015). And Malaysia, is not alone in seeking to increase women's representation, particularly on corporate boards, GCC states such as Qatar, for example, have followed the Malaysian targets (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning 2011). Indeed, around the world, governments and corporations are beginning to pay attention to arguments that increasing the diversity of corporate boards yields tangible, bottom line benefits in the form of increased productivity, better risk management. For example, a recent study of small and medium sized service sector firms, gender diversity of CEOs was found to have significant indirect effects on both growth and profitability (Carter, Simkins, and Simpson 2003; Collins-Dodd, Gordon, and Smart 2004).

If we start within what is termed within Islamic financial markets, the "conventional financial market" female managers are often portrayed as more risk averse and therefore better in back office support roles rather than front office risk and propriety trading where the money is made. This kind of gender essentialism – construing women as all the same in their differences from men – is a performative claim about the value of women's expertise and knowledge. But these kinds of strategic claims are double edged. Because of the larger context of investment banking culture, where ritualized aggressive hypercompetitive masculinity has become an acknowledged part of workplace expectations, portraying women as risk averse lowers the value of their expertise. In the US, female workers speak of the need to acknowledge the rubric of machismo in order to be admitted to the

game and viewed as a proficient player (Levin 2001; Zaloom 2006). If ritualized language and aggression are crucial indices of competence, then women in the financial services may be structurally barred from achieving full competence by the informal rituals and practices of the profession as practiced by the Wall Street Wolves.



Masculine Credit Card from Bank Islam

In the Malaysian context, within Islamic finance in particular, Malaysian women are gaining representation on powerful rule-making bodies such as the Securities Commission and Bank Negara's Shariah Advisory Councils, e.g. Associate Professor Dr. Engku Rabiah Adawiah

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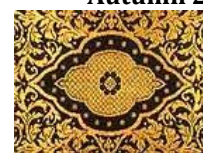
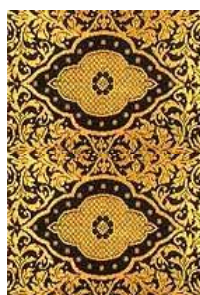
Engku Ali, Associate Professor Dr. Shamsiah Mohamad, and Prof. Madya Dr. Rusni binti Hassan. But there is a structural roadblock here because conventional and Islamic markets are interlinked through training systems, prestige systems, and trading systems (especially on secondary markets). Many scholars have commented on the emergence of a new “Shariah Elite” – which is tied to globalization of Islamic financial services firms and the interests of “conventional” financial services firms in offering Islamic financial services (Mohamad 2010; Bassens, Derudder, and Witlox 2012). And, while Malaysians have been crucial actors and their expertise has been imported in the MENA region, e.g. one scholar claims that “most of Dubai’s scholars are Malaysians,” Malaysian women’s expertise is almost completely unrepresented in these transnational linkages (Bassens, Derudder, and Witlox 2012, 346).

This is particularly important because the scaling up of expertise results both in significant profits and significant power. Indeed a significant aspect of scale is the power forge agendas – to carve new channels for interpretation and thereby set rules and standards and to carve new channels for profits by innovating new products. While in Malaysia, I am participating in training sessions and talking with industry and shariah experts in order to analyze how women are involved in the rule-making of Islamic financial regimes and what kind of cultural repertoires women draw on in their rule-making work. At this point in my fieldwork, I see two contradictory patterns: women and men in Islamic financial services are constructing a new version of gender complementarity and, at the same time, women are taking significant risks by forging new kinds of risk management products.

Returning to the CEO with whom we began, she states that men and women are both good at financial services work but good at different things. From her vantage point, men are good at taking risks and women are good at “back office,” meticulous support services such as legal and accounting. Again recall, she says that she is a good trader, risk taker, and CEO because she has high testosterone, i.e. because she is more competitive and masculine. Further, she thinks about this in hiring and composition of her team and, thus, her view has significant effects. Her views (which were repeated by other CEOs) are also mirrored in Shariah Advisory side of Islamic financial services. Shariah Committee members return repeatedly to a naturalized division of labor between male and female sharia experts: “women are more detail oriented;” “more meticulous;” and “this might be why they are recruited to Shariah Committees;” or also “Maybe women are valued because they are lebih cermat (more careful) and can bear tedious work. Men are working on the big issues but not on the small, small things...men and women complete each other the global view and the small view and therefore the discussion is comprehensive.” Again this framing of women’s work has consequences in relation to the cultural and economic value of women’s work. I suspect that this is a crucial reason why Malaysian women have not yet been able to render their financial expertise valuable on overseas markets.

In addition, the risks of this double-edged portrayal of women’s work for women in Malaysia can be seen, for example, in the disproportionate retrenchment of women across all sectors as a result of the financial crises of 1997-98 (Jomo and Lee 2001, 219). Currently, the effects of the global crisis in 2007 seem to indicate a similarly gendered increase in

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impoverishment and layoffs (Siong Hook Law and Hui Boon Tan 2009; Khoon and Mah-Hui 2010; Country Watch 2011).

With regard to new kinds of products, however, many Shariah Committee members (as well as those in the industry side particularly in risk management) are particularly interested in innovative approaches to risk through *ijtihad* or sharia interpretation. In service of product innovation, for example, many of the female scholars I have interviewed explicitly stated that they chose to specialize in commercial transactions rather than family law because of the flexibility and room for interpretive innovations and risk taking. For example, one female Shariah Advisor stated:

“Of course we know that even a little *riba* [interest] is forbidden but *gharar* [risk] is different, some aspects are ok because unavoidable. If we can allow Islamic hedging instruments then we could come up with speculative parameters and can thus innovate Islamic hedging products. Right now there are no clear guidelines on speculation. We cannot avoid *gharar* totally because of the nature of life. If there is a range from small to huge, then there is room to interpret. For example, if you buy 5 apples at 10 RM. Is there any *gharar*? Yes because the shape and weight of each apple is different but we can accept these differences so therefore we can see that *gharar* is different from *riba*.”

As I continue this research, I hope to explain these kinds of contradictions. As women seek to valorize their choices and frame their expertise in relation to the Malaysian division of labor and the international job market, the work of these “modern *uztazah*” is intertwined with

financialization. Indeed, framing their work in relation to the larger processes of financialization may offer one explanation for these contradictory patterns. I view financialization – or the ways in which finance places powerful financial actors at the center of people’s everyday lives – as a crucial structuring process in social life (French, Leyshon, and Wainwright 2011; Langley 2007; Martin 2002). But analyses of financialization have primarily been rooted in Euro-American contexts where the dismantling of the welfare state has meant a “privatization” of social services, transferring the management and risks of credit and debt onto households (Hall 2011; Hall 2012; Yeung and Lin 2003). Here, I move geographically to the context of Southeast Asia to ask similar questions about financial processes as they are enacted in spatial and cultural processes. Indeed, as Malaysian women are working to interpret sharia compliance within a national framework while also seeking to render their expertise legible as they engage financial regimes and systems of standardization they may produce other financial ‘worlds’ (Gudeman 2015; Hall 2011; Pollard and Samers 2013).

Laura Elder is Assistant Professor of Global Studies, St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame.

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Field Report

Mr. Teh-O-Ais-Kurang Manis

By Ed Kellerman

Two letters have changed the course of my life. The first was the Peace Corps Malaysia acceptance one in 1977. The second was the Fulbright grant letter to Malaysia earlier this year. One changed my life in my 20s, the second changed my life in my (ahem) 60s.

I spent eight weeks training in Kuala Dungun. For two weeks, all the Bahasa I knew was “nasi campur”. I finally learned “ayam goring”, “ikan bakar” and my diet began to improve. Then I went to Hospital KL to serve as a speech therapist and audiologist (my bachelor’s degree) for two years. Oh yeah, I married one of my patients, Sarjit Kaur, a Punjabi Sikh lady from Cameron Highlands.

In 1997, as I finished my doctorate in educational leadership, IUPUI (Indiana and Purdue U. at Indianapolis) needed a speech teacher for an engineering program they ran at UNITEN – Universiti Tenaga Nasional in Malaysia. My wife and son came and we lived in Bangsar, not far from where we lived in the Peace Corps. The Asian financial crisis forced UNITEN to tear up our contract after one year and we returned to New York and the University of Florida where I teach my public speaking, intercultural communication, and organizational leadership courses.

In 2003, I won a Provost’s Grant to Internationalize the curriculum and went to Malaysia and Thailand to continue research on

cultural factors in the Asian economic crisis and the people’s belief in a powerful elite. Turns out the rakyat no longer believed that the powerful elite have a right to help themselves to the treasury but no one would say that publicly. One Malaysian detective followed us as I was interviewing a former high level Telekom administrator but the fat, huffing, smoker couldn’t climb up 100 steep steps to the Convent School in Cameron Highlands that we did. All the Thai businessmen I interviewed believed they did not pray enough.

During my two week service trip to Nepal in 2013, I found a cheap flight and visited Malaysia during the Christmas holiday. My sister in law Savin took me to KL’s I-City and I had a hard time believing that a few days earlier, I was trekking in the Himalayas outside of Jumla with no lights, no electricity, no running water, and eating rice, dhal, chapatti, and tea. Yet now I was in I-City with millions of brilliantly LED lit Christmas displays and fat little Malaysians running around with triple decker ice cream cones.

That’s the value of travel. It shows there are no lack of resources, just distribution networks.

That second letter, this time from the Fulbright program, approved my short term hybrid teaching research grant back at UNITEN. Eighty percent of my grant is teaching my specialties of intercultural communication and organizational leadership while twenty percent is collecting data from college students on “surprise” – intercultural marriages. So far I have talked to a dozen engineering, business management, and graduate classes on cross cultural communication, reasoning strategies and progressive leadership, and literature

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reviews for doctoral dissertations. I have a steady stream of graduate students seeking help during my office hours.



Fulbright Fellows at a joint Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange and United States Embassy Event

One of my favorite talks has been an orientation for Malaysian students going to US, UK, Ireland, and Germany. Their first question was are Americans friendly? Definitely. In fact, we're downright accepting and personable. We like to talk about our hobbies so I showed them a picture of the award winning butter cow from last year's Iowa State Fair.

The second question was how was the weather. Since many were going to the Midwest, I told them to go to a place called Wal-Mart and ask for something called "long johns", both upper and lower and silk if they had them. The third question concerned tipping in restaurants, something not done in Malaysia. Of course, ten to twenty percent is normal. I tried to explain our weird restaurant payroll system but told them to tip if the service is good, no matter how small the dinner.

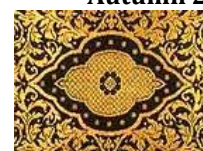
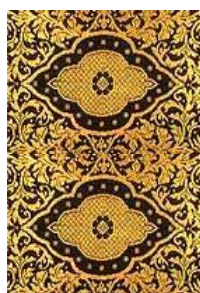
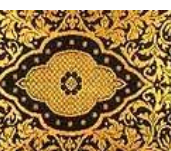
The last question was about the food. They seemed eager to know that KFC and Macs were everywhere in the US and Europe too. I have no idea why. I told them to look for Indian and Pakistani restaurants or bring their Baba's Curry Powder. But almost every town, especially college towns, had a store that sold Halal food. Of course, all real Jewish delicatessens welcome customers avoiding pork or lard products.

Part of all grants, Fulbright or otherwise involve breaking down barriers to successful intercultural communication. Our new administrative assistant Salina admitted she was terrified of having to talk English with me, the *Mat Salleh*. I don't think she knew I spoke Bahasa so Hassan Anas, our assistant registrar arranged a meeting where I called her my new "*sahabat*" (best friend) and asked her to help bring me to a higher linguistic level. We could see her visibly relax and the following week, she got my computer and password for my office.

The second incident was such an insight into Asian culture, I now include it in my intercultural communication class. Whenever I'm in town, I accompany my sister-in-law Savin on some of her real estate sales calls. One day, we drove one hour out to Port Klang to pick up a key for one of her listings. The man told us to drive to his house and get it from his wife and son. While waiting for the son, the mother asked her what an agent was, what an agent does, and other basic questions.

The son arrived and queried Savin on who she was, who she worked for, why didn't she work full time for an agency, and other rather insulting questions. She answered all his questions and maintained her composure even when he told her to go away and come back

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another day when he called. He said his father was confused and had no idea what he was doing.

She refused and reminded him no other agents would come all the way out there and that she had handled three other sales for the father. After he bargained her down to a 2% commission (from 2.5%), he relaxed and told his mother to get the key which she did immediately.

This is characteristic of what we call Asian “high context” communication where the emphasis is on the performance, rather than the words themselves. It is especially noticeable when the two participants are from different cultures, ethnicities, castes or clans, or geographic regions. In this case, a Chinese family and a Punjabi Sikh agent.

Lower context cultures of Europe and the US are more directly verbal. It’s less about the performance and more about explaining the deal, covering the objections, and concluding with an explicit understanding. Savin had to remind me to not take things personally, even when the mother feigned ignorance. They knew all along.

Lastly, I have been eating nearly every day at Maulana Restaurant just by the Serdang KTM station. Malaysian waiters tend to be very functional and no one in particular relates to me. I often have to summon them multiple times and they probably know me as my regular drink, Mr. Teh-o-ais-kurang manis.

Based on his clothing and *topi*, I believe the tandoori maker is of Afghan ancestry. He is responsible, sober, and very serious looking. I don’t think he speaks much Bahasa. But he makes tasty naan bread and succulent tandoori chicken. One night, two weeks after I started

patronizing his stall, the naan was particularly crispy on the bottom, soft and pillowy up top. The fish *kuah* was zippy and the dhal was thick and rich.

When I finished, I passed by his stall, smiled, nodded, gave him the thumbs up sign while patting my stomach. He turned from his tandoor and that his craggy face smiled back. The next day, he started shaking my hand upon arrival. And now he knows exactly what I want, even my drink, teh-o-ais kurang manis.

These three incidents, linguistically, contextually, and non-verbally are part of the Fulbright experience and personal endeavor to break down barriers between cultures. Yes, I enjoy teaching and doing research as the grant calls for. But just as my Peace Corps changed me 40 years ago, so I find myself changing again, becoming more educated and thus more pluralistic (if that’s possible). One never knows how our lives will turn out, but sometimes they turn out so deep and rich with culture, it’s hard to discern how much of an American I am and how much of a Malaysian I have become.

I did get a new high definition camera from the University of Florida and have put some short videos on Malaysian life together. They are on unlisted status at youtube and you may view them or use them as teaching tools for your classes, your friends, or your family.

Ed Kellerman is a Fulbright Fellow and Senior Lecturer at the University of Florida

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Malaysia and Singapore Videos from
Ed Kellerman, available on YouTube.

Modern Malay Wedding
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIqlydX1WcY>

Malaysian *Silat* Martial Arts
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hyspNgtT2M>

Malaysian Life 1, Mosque, Hari Raya
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xiqbs2hnHQ>

Malaysian Life 1a
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoXjmbpzzNM>

Malaysian Life 2
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxDmueFdIDw>

Singapore's National Day and 50th birthday
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdqlICCOdD4>

Dragon Boat Racing on the Singapore River
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyw1zAQ6I8Y>

Palm Oil Plantation, Orang Asli Kampung,
Pantai Morib
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEBpvHDXGXI>

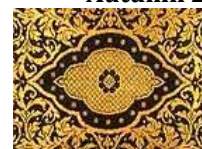
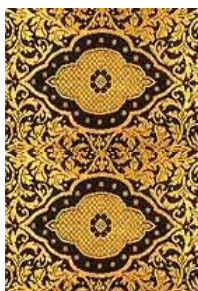
Batu Caves
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHVUP37T1ok>

MACEE and Embassy Event
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAMsPp8FDbc>

Visit to East Coast of Malaysia
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXlOEyFbnl4>

Cameron Highlands
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gES6GMUE3AI>

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Field Report

A Review of the Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies Library (馬來西亞華社研究中心), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia By Jack Meng-Tat Chia

In November 2014, I visited the Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies Library in Kuala Lumpur as part of my dissertation research on Chuk Mor (Zhumo 竺摩, 1913-2002), an eminent Buddhist monk in Malaysia. The Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies (<http://www.malaysian-chinese.net/>), housed within the historic building of Kuala Lumpur & Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (吉隆坡暨雪蘭莪中華大會堂) (<http://klscsh.org.my/>), is an important research institute for the study of Chinese community in Malaysia. It holds an extensive collection of documents, newspaper clippings, and published materials on Malaysian Chinese. Located at No.1, Jalan Maharajalela, 50150 Kuala Lumpur, just 5 minutes away from Petaling Street, Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown, the Library is in a very convenient location, being very close to the Pasar Seni and Maharajalela monorail stations. Thanks to its proximity to Chinatown, there are many affordable budget hotels and guesthouses in the neighboring areas for poor graduate students such as myself.

The Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia (馬來西亞中華大會堂總會) (<http://www.huazong.my/>) established the Centre in 1985 to spearhead research on Malaysian Chinese community and to provide a resource library to collect and preserve materials. It now has a publication series, an annual peer-review journal (Journal of Malaysian Chinese Studies 馬來西亞華人研究學刊), and an annual bulletin (CMCS Bulletin 華研通訊). All these publications (<http://www.malaysian-chinese.net/publication/>) can be purchased at

the Center. The Center depends primarily on donations from the Chinese community and sales of publications to fund its research projects and day-to-day operations.



Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies

The Library (<http://www.malaysian-chinese.net/library/>) is located on the first floor of the Center. Its hours of operation are 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Saturday. To access the library, you will be required to pay a daily admission fee of RM3 for students and RM10 for members of the public. If you plan to visit the library for a longer period of time, you can sign up for a 2-year membership. A 2-year membership fee costs RM25 for students and RM50 for members of the public. All new members are also required to pay a one-off RM3 joining fee. Do bring your membership card for return visits to the Library to avoid paying for a daily admission fee.

At present the Library does not have an online catalogue. However, a searchable catalogue is available in the Library. The materials are organized according to the Dewey Decimal Classification System so they may be a little hard to find initially. It is worth talking to the librarians, as they know the collections at their fingertips. The Library takes seriously its mission of preserving Malaysian Chinese culture and heritage, as well as conducting research in these areas of interests. Its goal is to acquire a copy of every publication of research value produced by the Chinese community in Malaysia and publications on the community published in other parts of the world. The Library has a huge collection of commemorative volumes (jinian tekan 紀念特刊) from various clan associations, schools, and temples. It also holds a large collection of Malaysian Chinese literature (Mahua wenxue 馬華文學) published between the 1940s and 1980s. However, according to the librarian, Southern University College (南方大學學院) Library in Johor currently has a greater collection of contemporary Malaysian Chinese literature. In addition, the Library is a good stop for secondary sources on Chinese diaspora studies in general and Malaysian Chinese studies in particular.

For me, the most useful collection for my research is their newspaper clippings from major Malaysian Chinese papers, including Nanyang Siang Pau (Nanyang shangbao 南洋商報), Sin Chew Jit Poh (Xingzhou ribao 星洲日報), and Kwong Wah Yit Poh (Guanghua ribao 光華日報). The Library has made an effort to collect newspaper clippings since the beginning of the 1980s. It has organized the clippings into twelve broad categories, namely, association (社團), culture (文化), education (教育), economy and finance (經濟與財政), history and geography (歷史與地理), international (國際), language and literature (語文與文學), politics (政治), philosophy and religion (哲學與宗教), social (社會), science and technology (科學與工藝), and personalities (人物). A list of subtopics within

each category can be found on the Library website: <http://www.malaysian-chinese.net/library/> The Library is currently in the midst of digitizing all their newspaper clippings and will make them available online within the next two to three years.

You can use the photocopy machine in the reading room to photocopy the materials you need. All printed books and magazines can be photocopied at a rate of RM0.20 per page for A4 size and RM0.50 per page for A3 size. Newspaper clippings, however, will cost RM0.50 per page for A4 size and RM1.00 for A3 size. Printing error will be charged RM0.10 per page. All photographs taken are charged at the same cost as photocopying. Staff will attend to you while photocopying to record the total number of pages printed, and are generally quite willing to assist you in any possible way.

Finally, for hungry researchers, there is a Chinese restaurant in the Chinese Assembly Hall located right next to the Center. The restaurant serves healthy tea rice as well as delicious Chinese tea. There is also an open-air dining area next to the Center's parking area where you can try yummy Malaysian cuisine. After lunch, you can visit the famous century-old temple, Wenzhen Gong Guanyin Temple (威鎮宮觀音寺), opposite the Center to pray for good luck for your research!

Jack Meng-Tat Chia is a PhD Candidate in History at Cornell University

Association for Asian Studies 2016 (Seattle) – Panels with Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei Content

MSB Sponsored Panel

SATURDAY, 2 APRIL 2016 | 3:00 PM

After Decolonization: Citizenship and Sovereignty in Postcolonial Malaysia and Singapore

Organizer: Juno Salazar Parrenas, Ohio State University

Panel Abstract:

In 1957, Malaya attained independence from British colonization. The boundaries of the nation-state in the early independence years were deeply unstable: in 1963, Sarawak lost its nearly century-long sovereignty when folded into the newly-created Malaysia; in 1965, Singapore left Malaysia to form an independent nation. Occurring during the Cold War, these contestations of sovereignty led the political leadership of Malaysia and Singapore to introduce laws permitting indefinite political detention, which were eventually used not only against the Communists but also against state political opponents more broadly. These authoritarian practices characterized the governments of the two powerful prime ministers, Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003) and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew (1965-1990), each of whom began their political careers in the late colonial period. However, Mahathir's retirement from politics and Lee's recent demise raise important questions regarding the reproduction of the techniques of governance that were crafted during the throes of decolonization. This panel asks: how are citizenship and sovereignty negotiated by citizens in contemporary Malaysia and

Singapore as a younger generation takes over the political leadership?

There are three papers in this panel. Amali Ibrahim examines how Lee Kuan Yew's rule has taught ordinary Singaporeans to become authoritarian in the politics of everyday lives. Rusaslina Idrus looks at how youth in Malaysia are pushing back against authoritarian control by creating their own spaces for social critique and intellectual discourse. Juno Parrenas shows why decolonization remains an ongoing struggle in Sarawak through a history of space and boundaries at Sarawak's wildlife centers.

Daromir Rudnycky will be the discussant.

Additional Panels

THURSDAY, 31 MARCH 2016 | 7:30 PM

Reading China-India Encounters in Colonial Literary Circuits

Organizer: Adhira Mangalagiri, University of Chicago

Panel Abstract:

China-India contact during the colonial period – a long-understudied subject – has attracted increased scholarly attention in recent years, in parallel to the popularity of works such as Pankaj Mishra's *From the Ruins of Empire* (2012) and Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy (2008-2015). The mode of this attention, however, has been largely historiographical. Literary scholarly attention continues to be predominantly focused on pre- or non-colonial forms of spiritual, cultural, and material exchanges between China and India.

This panel brings distinctly literary perspectives to bear on China-India encounters in the colonial period. Among other questions, we ask how literary readings of texts can interact with – and shed new light on – historiographical narratives of China, India, and the British Empire's triangulated relationships.

Mangalagiri focuses on the colonial prison cell in a collection of Chinese and Hindi literary texts, and maps the aesthetics of imprisonment emerging from the dynamic power relations between Chinese revolutionaries and Indian enforcers of British colonial law. Looking beyond the Chinese and Indian national borders, Shen reads the Chinese-Singaporean writer Zeng Shengti's memoir on his participation in Gandhi's "Non-Cooperation Movement," positioning Zeng within the contexts of Sinophone literature and comparative romanticisms. Extending outwards still, beyond Asia, Lee focuses on the figure of the coolie in Caribbean texts, exploring the Caribbean as a site of forgotten intimacy between India and China from where new possibilities for postcolonial theoretical concepts arise. Taken together, the papers present novel literary approaches to studying encounters between China and India within global networks of colonial circulation.

FRIDAY, 1 APRIL 2016 | 12:45 PM

Urban Exclusion in Southeast Asia -
Sponsored by the Southeast Asia Council

Organizer: Erik Lind Harms, Yale University

Panel Abstract:

The idea of "urban exclusion" typically evokes images of walls, gates, locked doors or other blockades and forceful mechanisms intentionally designed to deny people access to city spaces. In practice, however, exclusion is not always born from an explicit desire to keep people out, but often emerges as the byproduct of schemes ostensibly designed to make cities "better" places. This panel focuses specifically on the ways in which projects ostensibly designed to "improve" cities in both mainland and insular Southeast Asia have contributed to processes of urban exclusion. To show this, panelists look at the exclusionary consequences of heritage districts, religious-based housing developments,

infrastructural developments, modernization, and city beautification. While few of these projects were born from an explicit desire to keep people out of the cities we examine, they all have led to the exclusion of specific kinds of city residents in order to make their vision possible. Combining the perspectives of urban planning, urban geography, spatial demography, anthropology, and urban studies, and discussing case studies in Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, the panel papers develop a truly comparative and interdisciplinary lens that expands our understanding of how exclusion works in different social-cultural contexts. Comparing these cases and places reveals that the very will to create spaces of orderly urban conduct—be they "pious spaces," "historical spaces," "modern spaces," or "formal national spaces"—depends on the symbolic, spatial, and often forceful exclusion of people who do not fit into those models of order.

FRIDAY, 1 APRIL 2016 | 12:45 PM

Protest, Repatriation, and Resettlement in Southeast Asia: Counter-Narratives of Vietnamese Boat People in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the Philippines

Organizer: Jana Lipman, Tulane University

Panel Abstract:

After the Fall of Saigon in 1975, hundreds of thousands of people fled post-war Vietnam, crossing multiple borders and eliciting international humanitarian concern. This history is often understood as one in which helpless Vietnamese refugees fled communism in order to resettle in the West. Our panel problematizes this simplistic narrative by analyzing the politics of the refugee camp itself. Rather than conceptualizing the refugee camp as a theoretical space of "exception," we pay careful attention to the complex domestic politics in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the Philippines, all places marked by legacies of colonialism, Cold War politics, and regional rivalries. Protest,

repatriation, and resettlement in Southeast Asia were all alternative trajectories of postwar Vietnamese diaspora, complicating the more commonly known story of resettlement.

Jana Lipman's paper juxtaposes Malaysia's reluctant and often hostile hosting of Vietnamese Boat People with its general admittance of Filipinos fleeing the wars in Mindanao. Carina Hoang examines the politics of refugee protest, identifying Vietnamese Boat People as political agents in the rapidly changing context of late colonial Hong Kong. James Pangilinan argues for reconceptualizing "hospitality" in Palawan, a refugee camp where Catholic, anti-Communist, and anti-Marcos politics all held sway. Finally, sharing clips from her documentary film, Evyn Lê Espiritu shows how the remnants of Filipino refugee camps continue to haunt the landscape and collective memory. Together, we bring expertise in History, Geography, and Rhetoric, and our papers move across time and space, recognizing that Vietnamese Boat People interacted with and shaped national and post-colonial histories.

FRIDAY, 1 APRIL 2016 | 3:00 PM

The Power of Rice Politics in Asia

Organizer: Jamie Seth Davidson, National University of Singapore

Panel Abstract:

Almost any essay on rice in Asia takes note of its peculiarly political properties, especially since the crop remains a key foodstuff, despite increases in wealth and urbanization. But the conspicuousness of rice's political characteristics can lead to the assumption of these features rather than their analysis. Often such broad categories as political and economic elites, urban consumers, and farmers are invoked axiomatically. In contrast, this border-crossing panel proposes to illuminate the mechanisms that have made rice and continues to make it a supremely political commodity. The papers

together exhibit how explorations of power struggles over rice reveal rich and new insights to the study of key countries and events in 20th and 21st century Asia.

Lee's paper examines how the CPP's successful handling of the rice problem in China through its policy on workers' canteens was central in its outmaneuvering of the KMT on this critical issue. Ricks underscores the role the changing pattern of political wrangling over the sector in contemporary Thailand has played in explaining the country's current political quagmire, and particularly how the expansion of farm price subsidies for the purpose of electoral gain has impaired critical development patterns. Davidson highlights how the 2008 rice crisis compelled the Malaysian government to increase the rice sector's stagnant productivity, although this drive threatens the interests of the country's monopoly rice importer—formerly a state body, Bernas—that stands to lose significant revenue if the government raises yields to levels not seen since the Green-Revolution-led gains of the 1970s.

FRIDAY, 1 APRIL 2016 | 5:15 PM

Money Politics in Southeast Asia: Patronage, Clientelism, and Electoral Dynamics

Organizer: Allen Hicken, University of Michigan

Panel Abstract:

Throughout Southeast Asia, in a range of phenomena sometimes collectively labelled "money politics," candidates for elected office distribute patronage—particularistic benefits, including cash, goods, appointments, or other rewards—via clientelist networks. Sometimes illegal or illicit, other times above-ground and at least tacitly condoned, such practices span the electoral cycle and deeply inflect the quality and character of governance structures, democracy, and national integration. This panel will bring

together scholars using a variety of methods to study on money politics in Southeast Asia. The panel will see to present work tracing the flows and implications of patronage for electoral gain in Southeast Asia, including: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Despite the ubiquity of these practices and a long-standing focus on patron–client ties in the literature, surprisingly few cross-country studies have compared the forms, determinants, actors and outcomes of money politics, particularly in Southeast Asia. In this panel we seek to situate patronage and clientelism in the nexus of politicians, parties, brokers and voters. Through richly textured analysis of our cases we will interrogate causes and motivations found across three overarching and overlapping categories: institutional, structural, and normative.

FRIDAY, 1 APRIL 2016 | 5:15 PM

Muslim Moralities in Asian Capitalisms -
Sponsored by the South Asian Muslim
Studies Association (SAMSA)

Organizer: Christopher Brennan Taylor,
George Mason University

Panel Abstract:

This panel – sponsored by the South Asia Muslim Studies Association – examines the relationship between Muslim moral traditions and advanced capitalisms in South and Southeast Asia. The relationship of morality and economies in Asia has long been the subject of social scientific inquiry. Max Weber theorized Confucian ethics as guiding literati's pursuit of position over profit, while French sociologist Marcel Mauss found Melanesian gift moralities to be “kernels” of modern markets. Contemporary research by Asianists has built on and complicated understandings of how capitalist economies are both “embedded” in societies and their ethical traditions, and transformative of them. Research on “market

cultures” (Hefner 1998), “spiritual economies” (Rudnyckyj 2010), and “enterprise culture” (Osella and Osella 2009; Sloane-White 2006) has greatly facilitated our recognition that capitalism is not singular in its organization or ethical bases, but necessarily plural and “vernacular” (Hamilton 2006; Rudner 1993). Yet, scholars remain divided whether morality is a necessary and important part of capitalist systems, and/or whether “moral economies” are at odds with the expansion of capitalism (e.g. Scott 1976, 1985; Edelman 2005; Sivaramakrishnan 2005; Griffith 2009). The panel opens with remarks on Asianists' contributions to this theoretical puzzle before the inter-disciplinary, inter-regional presentations. The case studies explore ways in which modern moral traditions extend vernacular capitalisms and, conversely, where they challenge or redirect market-based rationalities. We also examine the ways in which capitalist agencies and power violate or engage local ethical traditions as Asian economies are fast becoming 21st-century hubs of finance and growth.

SATURDAY, 2 APRIL 2016 | 8:30 AM

Religion and Nationalism in Contemporary
Southeast Asia: Historical Legacies, Political
Mobilization and Identity Formation

Organizers: Dian A. H. Shah, National
University of Singapore and Kikue
Hamayotsu, Northern Illinois University

Panel Abstract:

A recent surge of violence against religious minority communities across Southeast Asia raises a number of important questions about the role of religion in nationalism, identity formation and democratic transitions. Despite significant scholarly contributions made by Southeast Asianists to the studies of nationalism (e.g., Anderson 1983; Kahin 1953), the role of religion in nationalism and nation-building in deeply divided Southeast Asian societies has still been

largely neglected. This cross-national comparative panel invites four area/country experts to draw upon their first-hand empirical research, innovative data, and archival sources in respective countries and regions to explore the theoretical questions of religion, nationalism, and identity formation in order to fill this gap. The panel is organized along geographic localities to address three broad themes: (1) elite efforts and constitutional frameworks in managing deep religious divisions (Shah on Indonesia and Malaysia); (2) the political mobilization of religious identity to sustain or oppose an incumbent regime and its effect on nationalism (Selway on Thailand; Walton on Burma); and (3) the political origin and effects of secular and religious nationalism in emerging democracies (Hamayotsu on cross-religion case studies). Collectively and comparatively, we seek to look into historical legacies, institutional frameworks, and political mobilization of religious identity and symbols in emerging Southeast Asian democracies to gain a better understanding of the role of religion in nation-building and inter-communal relations.

SATURDAY, 2 APRIL 2016 | 5:15 PM

After Lee Kuan Yew: Repositioning Singapore Studies - Sponsored by Southeast Asia Council

Organizer: Chi Tim Ho, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Panel Abstract:

Much of Singapore's international image has been closely intertwined with the Republic's first Prime Minister, the late Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015). Lee's commitment to political stability, a centralized state, and to economic development has been associated with controversial policies and positions. Singapore's noted transformation from a "third to first-world nation" drew admiration and criticism from within and without over the intensity and character of state integration. Lee's dominance in domestic politics

and governance, as well as his prominence on the international stage, has shaped how observers have come to understand and interpret what Singapore is about.

This personification of Singapore in Lee and the discourse it generated obfuscated local complexities, varying experiences, and the country's connections to Southeast Asia. Singapore's official self-identification as a global city reinforced this distinctiveness by branding itself as more similar to New York and London than the Malay/Southeast Asian world in which it is situated. This singular perception of Singapore as an extension of Lee has limited the depth and breadth of mainstream discussions about the Republic.

This panel repositions Singapore Studies by reconnecting it to its broader Southeast Asian context. It challenges official representations and mainstream critiques of Singapore by questioning the categories, narratives, and boundaries through which the city-state has been understood. Individually, the presenters offer different disciplinary, theoretical and institutional perspectives that complicate the study of Singapore. Collectively, they promote a vision of Singapore Studies that recognizes differences within the local setting and its interconnectedness to broader Asian contexts.

SUNDAY, 3 APRIL 2016 | 8:30 AM

Speaking Across Borders: Language and Human Movement Across Asia

Organizer: Kathryn Collins Hardy, Washington University in St. Louis

Panel Abstract:

Human movement affects and is affected by language. Languages have too often been framed as intrinsically rooted in geographically specific places, such that connections between speech populations, linguistic systems, and named places are assumed to be fixed. But everyday speech practices are mobile and malleable,

allowing (and preventing) unexpected social interactions. This panel explores how diverse forms of language are shaped by movement within and across boundaries throughout Asia and beyond. In this panel, we examine forms of spoken language as they emerge from interactions, as people move across Asia and the world. Andrew Carruthers examines the contours of linguistic sameness and difference that permit ethnic Bugis migrants from Indonesia to assimilate as Malay speakers in Malaysia, even as linguistic signs of difference allow the policing of migrant bodies. Laura Kunreuther describes the work of UN interpreters in the aftermath of the recent civil war in Nepal, imagined as mere “conduits” of victims’ voices but frustrated by communicative complexities. Carl Kubler explores the production and circulation of Chinese Pidgin English (CPE) in the port city of Canton in the early 19th century, arguing that it allowed complex social relations beyond trading relationships. Finally, Laura Jenkins discusses the ethnolinguistic specificity of the Jews of Mizoram in Northeast India, whose community narratives tie them both culturally and linguistically to both Israel and India. By attending to language as social practice, we assess how spoken communicative interaction shapes human movement and creates links Asia's social, political, and spatial formations.